



TEACHERS AND STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE USE OF TABOO LANGUAGE FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION IN MOZAMBIKAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

ATITUDES DOS PROFESSORES E ALUNOS DO ENSINO
SECUNDÁRIO RELATIVAMENTE AO USO DE LINGUAGEM
TABU PARA DEBATES EM SALA DE AULA EM ESCOLAS
SECUNDÁRIAS MOÇAMBICANAS

Edson Manuel Senguaio¹
Universidade Púnguè

Abstract: The present paper results from a study, which aimed at exploring secondary school teachers and students' attitudes towards the use of taboo topics for classroom discussion. Conducted in two schools in Chimoio, Manica province, namely 'Escola Secundária da Vila Nova' and 'Escola Missionária American Board', the study involved a universe of fifty grade 12 students, five teachers and two school managers. A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches were employed for its undertaking, though the qualitative one was the most predominant. Data was collected through of questionnaires, administered for teachers and students, interviews conducted with the school managers. Apart from the tools mentioned, a critical analysis on the incidence and treatment of taboo topics in two coursebooks recommended and in use in the Secondary Education was also made. Among other issues, findings reveal, of all potentially controversial topics normally found in teaching programs, drugs and HIV/ AIDS were the top two topics that are mostly dealt with in language classes. Another major conclusion reached was that students disclosed some hesitation to deal with topics such as abortion and pregnancy, especially among female students. A further aspect noticed is that very little seems to

¹ esenguaio@gmail.com

be reflected in teaching materials in use. From the two coursebooks assessed about the aspect in discussion, the grade 12 course-book seems to bring more instances of controversial topics or language when compared to the grade 11 one, where treatment of such topics are kept to a minimum.

Keywords: *Taboo Language; Cross-cultural Communication; Interculturality; Euphemism; Communicative Competence*

Resumo: O presente trabalho resulta de um estudo que tinha em vista compreender atitudes dos professores e alunos do ensino secundário em relação à utilização de temas tabu para discussão em sala de aula. Realizado em duas escolas em Chimoio, na província de Manica, nomeadamente 'Escola Secundária da Vila Nova' e 'Escola Missionária American Board', o estudo envolveu um universo de cinquenta alunos da 12ª Classe, cinco professores e dois gestores escolares. Para o efeito, usou-se uma combinação de abordagens qualitativa e quantitativa, embora a qualitativa tenha sido a mais predominante. Dados foram colhidos através de questionários, administrados a professores e alunos e entrevistas realizadas com os gestores escolares. Para além das ferramentas supramencionadas, foi também feita uma análise crítica sobre a incidência e tratamento de temas tabu em dois manuais de curso recomendados e em uso no Ensino Secundário. Entre outras questões, os resultados revelam, de todos os tópicos potencialmente controversos normalmente encontrados nos programas de ensino, drogas e VIH/SIDA são os dois principais tópicos mais tratados nas aulas de línguas. Outra grande conclusão a que se chegou foi que os estudantes revelaram alguma hesitação em lidar com temas como o aborto e a gravidez, especialmente entre as estudantes do sexo feminino. Um outro aspecto observado é que muito pouco parece se reflectir nos materiais de ensino em uso. Dos dois manuais avaliados sobre o aspecto em discussão, o da 12ª classe parece trazer mais casos de tópicos controversos quando comparado com o da 11ª, onde o tratamento de tais tópicos é mantido a um mínimo.

Palavras-chave: *Linguagem Tabu; Comunicação Intercultural; Interculturalidade; Eufemismo; Competência Comunicativa*

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Contextualising

Despite the fact that taboos are an ancient matter, discussion on them has been heavily objected. Even with the evolution of the societies, where there has been relative tolerance to certain issues that then constituted strong taboos (Tekin, 2011, Fershtman, 2008 & Holster, 2005), people tend to disclose reluctance to talk about them. This situation tends to be worse in the traditional society, where conflicting views about what is usually pre-established are simply not accepted (Chigidi, 2009).

The above has resulted in rather negative impact on studies related to taboos as there has been some reluctance revealed by respondents to openly and thoroughly unveil data on their practices and feelings in relation to taboo language (Xian, 2011). This has contributed greatly on the fact that very few studies have been carried out so far on the area.

However, from the very few studies carried out on the matter, particularly in the field of Teaching of English as Second or Foreign Language Teaching (TESL/ FLT), it has been found that taboos carry a high motivational value, as such topics are often avidly discussed in private (Tekin, 2011). What is more, as taboo topics are, by nature, controversial, they may well serve as a springboard for students to develop their communicative ability as they may be required to express diverging points of view as well as give arguments to support or to oppose a position, just to state an example.

The adoption of the Communicative Approach (CA) may be said to have markedly revolutionised the field of Foreign Language Teaching (FLT). Characterised for giving prominence to effective use of language (Tomlinson, 2011 and Grant, 1994) and the use of language in appropriate situations through social and cultural knowledge (Saville-Troike, 2009), this approach has influenced greatly the field of language teaching.

Based on the above, recent reforms held in the Secondary Education in Mozambique have resulted in the inclusion of an array of controversial topics (mainly through crosscutting issues) that were then avoided and strictly disallowed to be treated especially in schools. That presupposes that, apart from the technical knowledge that they are expected to acquire in schools, learners are supposed to be socio-culturally aware of the diversity that has characterised contemporary societies.

Besides, with the technological advancements, through various channels such as interpersonal contacts, movies and the internet, learners have access to

insights on a range of topics of which some constitute (strong) taboos, what has resulted in quasi-everlasting changes regarding learners' needs. Therefore, there is a need for language teachers not to shut their eyes in relation to issues that language learners have been exposed to including taboos (Tekin, 2011).

1.2. Problem Statement

One of the corollaries of the adoption of the CA was the insertion of an array of topics (of which, some are considered somehow controversial) in educational programs (Deckert, 1996 in Tekin, 2011). What has been noticed is that, despite the fact that there has been a notable tendency for tolerating some issues then considered (very) strong taboos, discussing topics such as sexual relations, abortion and HIV/ AIDS among others still remains a matter of strict avoidance in many contexts, particularly in traditional societies, as stated previously.

There is a perception that being aware of norms, habits, and customs of a community constitutes a springboard to success in intercultural communication. Interlocutors need to know, for instance, when to say or do something and when not, just to state an example.

In contexts characterised by 'multi-culturality', for example, knowledge of cultural differences is of great relevance. Considering that one of the aspects that is part of every culture are taboos, and because they vary from people to people, awareness about their existence should not be taken for granted.

In the context of teaching of English as a Second or Foreign Language (TEFL/ TESL), handling the 'so-called' crosscutting issues puts teachers in a rather challenging situation. On the one hand, there are cultural aspects to be preserved and/ or avoided for being considered politeness constraints. On the other hand, learners need to be aware of their existence. From the standpoint that

in the process of learning a foreign language, learners also need to know what constitute good and bad practices, so they do not create embarrassments or constraints, especially in cross/ inter-cultural communication, taboos should not be ignored. Before the above-described situation, the following question can be posed: How Can Teachers of English Deal with Taboo Topics in EFL Classes?

1.3. Research Objectives

The major aim of the present study is to exploit teachers, students' as well as leadership openness towards the treatment of taboo issues in English language classes. This general aim is broken down into the following ones:

- a) To analyse teachers' feelings towards teaching about taboo language;
- b) To find out how offensive teachers and students find language they encounter in various contexts in their day-to-day;
- c) To explore students' behaviour when taboo issues are raised in EFL classes;
- d) To examine school leaders' reactions towards the treatment of taboo topics in EFL classes;
- e) To assess the incidence of taboo language in teaching and learning materials

1.4. Defining Taboos

From its etymology, the term 'taboo' comes from the Tongan² 'tapu' and it literally means 'prohibited', 'disallowed' or 'forbidden'. The Oxford Advanced

² With a population estimated in 111 009 people (2008), Tonga is a country that consists of 170 small islands in the Southwest Pacific Ocean. It is ruled by a king and is a member of the British Commonwealth. Its capital is called Nuku'alofa (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 2009)

Learner's Dictionary of Current English (1995, p. 1213) defines a taboo as being "a cultural or religious custom that forbids people to do, touch, use or talk about a certain thing [...] a general agreement not to discuss or to do something."

Freud (1919: 31) regards the term taboo in a two-fold perspective, namely in terms of restrictions and prohibitions that can be explained in rather different ways. According to the author, taboo restrictions are not a result of a commandment of a god, they impose their own prohibitions, and reasons behind their establishment are often presented. Differently from the taboo restrictions, religious or moral prohibitions are mainly characterised by the absence of all justification for their institution and they are often from an unknown origin.

Still on this concern, Wardhaugh (2006, p. 236) goes further stating that taboos are 'the prohibition or avoidance in any society of behaviour believed to be harmful to its members in that it would cause them anxiety, embarrassment, or shame'.

In any community or society there is some sort of a 'code of conduct' and, as such, all members are morally compelled obey it rigorously, and to any violating it some harm will occur (Jay, 2009). The term taboo may be also used to refer to a place or food that, once established, mentioning it is totally forbidden for being against values embedded in cultural or moral beliefs (Chu, 2006; Holster, 2005).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Reasons behind the Establishment of Taboos

The main idea behind the establishment of taboos finds its basis on a number of motivations. Taboos have been established in order to protect a community or people from adverse implications that may result from defiance or breach of them that can be misfortune, ostracism, sickness or even death.

Mbaya (2002, p. 225) advocates that because avoidance of taboo terms is regarded as a society-based customary practice, breaking them may be a reason for 'punishment or public shame'. In extreme cases, breaking taboos may result in death as what happens under 'Sharia' law, in some parts of northern Nigeria, a woman who practices adultery, a strong religious taboo, can be stoned to death (Allan & Burridge, 2006). In fact, social punishment or reprehension component is what put taboos in force in forms of attitudes and reactions of other members of a society (Fershtman et al., 2011).

To Holden (2001, p. 6), the main reason for the existence of taboos is the promotion of 'social control', 'to maintain the 'status quo' and 'to validate the authority of the ruling classes'. Concrete examples based on Holden's view can be found within the Hindu caste system where certain groups taken as outcasts or 'untouchables' have been taken as unclean and capable of polluting others.

A noteworthy aspect that should be considered, however, is that despite the fact that there are taboos that societies tend to be keen in preserving; views towards them tend to change as societies evolve (Tekin, 2011; Holster, 2005; Fershtman, 2008). In fact, with the evolution of societies, people tend to be relatively more tolerant to taboos, though certain environments tend to be more conservative on the matter in analysis.

2.2. Language, Cultural Dynamics and Views in Relation to Taboos

From the standpoint that language and culture are intrinsically interwoven as Wardhaugh (2006, p. 222) highlights, it is clear that as language changes, views in relation to topics of taboo nature also change. On a regular basis, it can be noticed that members of a given society slot in fresh terms into their lexicon. A clear evidence of this may be seen in the tendency for words, such as 'bloody' and 'hell', terms not overtly mentioned in old days, for being

considered an extremely strong politeness constraint to be gradually used more and more often (Holster, 2005; Holden, 2001). Some terms, formerly taken as ‘unspeakable’, have tended to be softened to the extent of starting to be part of people’s daily discourse.

Such terms have been diminished and people have come to use it more and more often (cf. Holster, *op. cit.*). The same is applicable to words such as ‘fuck’ and all its related grammatical constructions as well as ‘damn’ then severely condemned but that have been increasingly used lately despite the fact that they are not widely accepted, especially in formal environments.

Another important aspect to highlight is as it is postulated by Wardhaugh (2006, p. 240) when he recognises that certain terms that constituted strong taboos that definitely created certain constraints ‘have loosened’ by means of euphemistic expressions in the late twentieth century. In other words, there has been a noticeable tendency for people to resort to circumlocutions instead of saying things directly (especially those considered offensive) in order to lessen the damage or constraints that may result from the direct use of certain terms considered unspeakable (cf. Wardhaugh, 2006).

2.3. What Makes People Use Taboo Language

The use of obscene language is often seen as being motivated by a range of reasons. To Jay (2009: 154), the use of taboo language may be used to achieve a range of personal or interpersonal outcomes that may be positive, negative or inconsequential in terms of impact on others. In fact, many words that are taken as forbidden, impolite or even inelegant to say may be used to express a range of emotions in distinct situations.

The central point to consider here is that there is always a reason for people to swear or use obscene language. Such reasons are summarised into three

major groups: psychological, social as well as linguistic ones (cf. Jay, op. cit). Looking at the psychological reasons, taboo language is normally used as an emotions' intensifier as in expressing anger and frustration. Still under psychological reasons for the use of bad or proscribed language, Wardhaugh (2006, p. 239) sets out that that taboo language may be used as a means to exteriorise contempt, aggressiveness or to 'mock authority'.

Concerning social reasons, taboo words are often used to exteriorise endearment and solidarity. A clear example of this can be noticed in the examples like 'What's up, my nigger?' and 'Are you fucking alive?' among other examples (Jay, 2009).

Under linguistic reasons or motives, there is a perception that certain words are taken as clean while others are considered dirty. For instance, the word 'balls' is regarded as 'dirty' while 'testicles', however, is considered clean.

2.4. The Use of Euphemism

As certain words, expressions or gestures constitute an 'extremely strong politeness constraint' (Wardhaugh, 2006), certain words are not to be mentioned at least in certain circumstances. As a means to avoid the use of such words, circumlocutions and euphemisms are often employed (p. 240).

The term 'euphemism' is a Greek word that etymologically means '*eu*' to mean 'good', 'well' and '*pheme*' for voice, utterance, speaking (Allan and Burridge, 2006). It is mostly found in ordinary language for being considered clean, sweet-talking; differently from its counterpart 'dysphemism' (speaking offensively) is a politeness constraint (ibid, p. 29).

Euphemistic words or expressions are especially meant to soften certain language that is often frowned upon. This can be depicted in examples like 'to answer a nature's call' and 'to wash one's hands' to denote 'to defecate' or 'to

urinate' and 'to sleep with someone' instead of 'to have sex' among others expressions. In other words, euphemistic words or expressions are often used as a way to avoid mentioning certain things directly, i.e., terms used to avoid the use of a more unequivocal term or expression (Wardhaugh, 2006 and Hernández-Campoy & Conde-Silvestre, 2012). Along with the alluded authors, Gao (2013, p. 2313) points out that 'euphemistic words and expressions allow us to talk about unpleasant things and neutralise their *unpleasantnesses*.

One way of so doing can be by means of figures of speech. Generally, they can be widely used in order to avoid saying things directly, i.e., to avoid using offensive language. They may be through the use metaphors, understatements (as in asleep for 'dead'), comparisons (buns for 'buttocks') as well as metonymy, e.g. 'He has gone' for 'He died'. Besides, euphemistic words or expressions may also be expressed by means of ambiguous statements (as in the use of 'it' for 'excrement' as well as 'girl in trouble' for 'pregnancy').

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study consisted of a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches though the former approach was more predominant.

The population of the researcher's interest were all students aged 18 and/or above in both schools. The total number of students fulfilling this requisite was of $N=508$ students, divided in various strata, as it detailed on Table 1. Of this number, 225 students (33 male and 192 female) were from '*Escola Missionária American Board*' and the remaining 283 students (134 male and 149 female) from '*Escola Secundária da Vila Nova*'.

Table 1: Research Population

School	Distribution of the Population per Stratum											
	18 – 20			21 – 23			24 – 26			26+		
	M	F	MF	M	F	MF	M	F	MF	M	F	MF
E. M. American Board	15	72	87	8	86	94	6	22	28	4	12	16
E. S. da Vila Nova	102	115	217	32	34	66						
Subtotal	144	160	304	50	110	160	6	22	28	4	12	16
Total	508											

The population of teachers in both schools was of $N=8$, of which $N_1=6$ were from 'Escola Secundária da Vila Nova' (of which $n=3$ were taken to be part of the study) and $N_2=2$ from 'Escola Missionária American Board'.

To select the sample, the population was first divided into two groups (male and female) that were then grouped into four age range-based substrata (18 – 20, 21 – 23, 24 – 26 and >26 years) in both groups.

The total sample of respondents decided upon consisted of 50 respondents (25 from each school) taken on the basis of the total number of potential respondents in each stratum. In order to determine the number of respondents to be taken from each substratum, the following formula, adapted from Kothari (2004, p. 63) was then used:

$$n_s = n_t \bullet \frac{Ns}{N}$$

Where n_s stands for the substrata sample; n_t , the total required sample size; N_s : the strata subpopulation and N , the entire population in each of the two sexual groups of eligible respondents. After calculating the number of respondents that were supposed to be part from each substratum, as it is shown on Table 2, simple random sampling was used to identify the specific respondents that were supposed to be part of the study, based on regular intervals on each of the stratum list.

Table 2: Number of Respondents per Substratum

School	Sample Size per Substratum and Gender											
	18 – 20			21 – 23			24 – 26			26+		
	M	F	MF	M	F	MF	M	F	MF	M	F	MF
E. M. American Board	6	5	11	3	6	9	2	1	3	1	1	2
E. S. da Vila Nova	9	10	19	3	3	6						
Sub-Total	15	15	30	6	9	15	2	1	3	1	1	2
Total	50											

The sample of teachers working teaching daytime intermediate level classes consisted of 5 male teachers (3 from 'Escola Secundária da Vila Nova', that were randomly selected from a universe of 6 teachers, where all teachers were listed and every second teacher was picked from the list and the 2 teachers working with the same level at 'Escola Missionária Board'). In addition, two school managers from both schools were also involved in the study.

For data gathering, questionnaires were administered to teachers and students. The teachers' questionnaire was meant to explore their views in relation to treatment of taboos in their day-to-day teaching and it comprised a set of ten combined open-ended and closed-ended questions.

Differently from the teachers' questionnaire, the students' questionnaire consisted of nine close-ended questions and the point was to measure their behaviour towards language of taboo nature, both in and outside classroom. It is important to highlight that the questionnaire for students was primarily devised in English and then translated into Portuguese (bearing in mind that English is not generally taken as the medium of instruction throughout the country).

Interviews were very helpful in gathering managers' reactions in relation to the matter is discussion. Among other issues, the interviews were meant to find out the degree of managers' openness in relation to the teaching of taboos in schools, how the schools handle crosscutting issues in general, among other aspects. Similarly, the interview guide was translated into Portuguese.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1. Students' Questionnaire

This study involved 50 day-shift grade 12 students, 25 from each school (12 were male and 13 female). Overall, the majority of the enquired students (60 per cent of the total number), as it is shown on Table 2, were aged between 18 and 20 years. In addition, 15 students (corresponding to 30 per cent of the sample) were aged between 21 and 23 years. From the remaining 5 students, 3 (2 males and 1 female) were aged between 24 and 26 years and 2 (1 male and 1 female) were found over 26 years of age.

The first question sought to find out from the students whether teachers of English dealt with a number of topics that are normally found in English language teaching programs. The results reveal that 'Drugs' (92%) and 'HIV/AIDS' (70%) were the top two topics that respondents generally indicated as the ones teachers mostly dealt with in classes. Concerning the remaining topics, all respondents said that their teachers did not usually deal with 'menstruation'. This tendency could be noticed in the topics homosexuality and premarital sex where there were only 2% of affirmative answers, followed by war (10%), pregnancy (14%) and abortion (32%).

The following question aimed at finding out whether teachers normally allow the students openly speak about the selected topics in the previous question. All respondents were unanimous in affirming that their teachers normally allow them openly discuss them during classes.

In the subsequent question, respondents were asked to indicate the topics they would openly discuss in classes. In relation to this question, respondents revealed relatively more openness to discuss Drugs and HIV/AIDS, where 80% of the sample reported being open to discuss the former and 58%, the latter when

compared to the outstanding listed topics. The respondents generally disclosed relative hesitation in discussing abortion (90%), premarital sex (88%), homosexuality and menstruation (86%) as well as pregnancy (78%). Despite slight gender number differences in the sampled group, female respondents revealed relatively more discomfort to discuss topics such as abortion, pregnancy, war and premarital sex when compared to the male group.

In Q. 4, respondents were subjected to indicate the language (s) teachers and students usually used to discuss the matters indicated above. Of the sample, 8% said that their teachers only used Portuguese, 22%, only English and 70%, both Portuguese and English when tackling such crosscutting issues (topics) in language lessons.

The coming question sought to find out from the respondents how often they heard each of the listed words for the study. Of the total sample, the majority of the respondents reported not normally hearing the words 'asshole' (64%), 'damn' (62%) and 'pussy' (54%). Most respondents reported hearing the word 'shit' in their day-to-day lives (48% of the enquired said that they sometimes hear it, 26%, often and 18% said they always hear it. Only 8% reported never hearing the word in case). The word 'fuck' was taken as the second one that students normally hear. Concerning this word, only 36% of the enquired respondents (corresponding to 18 respondents) reported never hearing the word in case while 24% said they sometimes hear it, 22%, often and 18%, always. Still concerning the question in allusion, the words 'dick', 'bastard' and 'nigger' were also within the group students mostly hear.

The subsequent question was meant to measure how offensive respondents found the words in allusion. Basing on the number of respondents who provided answers to the question (48), as 2 respondents did not answer it, the words 'fuck' at 45%, 'asshole' and 'pussy' (39%) were the top 3 words considered extremely offensive by 22 and 19 respondents, respectively. The

words 'shit' and 'bastard' were considered offensive by 60,4% and 52% of the respondents, respectively, followed by the word 'dick' (35,4%).

In relation to the channels where they mostly hear the proscribed words, the major sources of proscribed language were the movies (50%) followed by friends (30,4%) and internet (15,2%). Of all the proposed channels, television and the teachers were the least chosen ones both at 2,1%.

4.2. Teachers Questionnaire

The first question consisted of 11 swearwords whereby teachers were asked to decide how offensive such words were (where respondents had to decide whether they would be considered extremely offensive, offensive, inoffensive or not sure). From the list, the words considered extremely offensive were 'fuck' and 'motherfucker' (40%) and the remaining 60% rated the two words offensive. In Q. 2, respondents were asked to indicate the words they normally in their day-to-day lives. From the list of swearwords indicated, respondents reported using the word 'shit' (100%) in their day-to-day speech. Other words that respondents said they used were 'nigger' and 'fuck' both at 40%.

In the subsequent question, respondents were asked if they would ever allow their students use the proscribed in class and the results were surprisingly interesting. Despite the fact that they normally use some of the proscribed, they generally did not consider letting their students use such words in class. Of all 5 respondents, there was no certainty in relation to words 'damn' and 'asshole' both at 20%.

The Q. 4 sought to find out from the teachers what would be their reaction if a student asked them about the meaning of any of the words listed above. As it illustrated in Fig. 9, 60% of the respondents would just tell students the meaning of the word and then tell them that it is not appropriate English and

20% would simply ignore the question and continue with the lesson. The remaining 20% of the respondents said that they would tell students that it is offensive language that only naughty people use it and that it is not appropriate to be used in contexts such as classroom, among adult people, etc.

In the subsequent question (5), respondents were supposed to decide on how sensitive a list of topics normally found and discussed through the 'so-called' crosscutting issues. The topics were abortion, premarital sex, pregnancy, sexual relations, menstruation, adultery, HIV/ AIDS, drugs, alcohol, war and homosexuality. Of the topics, respondents generally indicated the topics abortion, homosexuality, adultery, menstruation, sexual relations, and premarital sex as the most sensitive topics. In relation to the other topics figuring on the list, 80% of the teachers considered that alcohol, drugs as well as HIV/ AIDS sensitive. In addition, 60% did not regard pregnancy as being sensitive.

In Q. 6, in which respondents were expected to indicate by ticking off the topics they would openly deal with in language classes. Teachers generally revealed more openness to deal with issues related to drugs, alcohol, war as well as HIV/ AIDS when compared to topics such as homosexuality, sexual relations and premarital sex. From the findings, teachers tend to show some reluctance in openly handling such topics in language classes.

In the subsequent question, teachers were asked whether their school leaderships normally allowed the deal with issues as the above in an open way. In relation to this aspect, 80%, corresponding to 4 teachers (3 from '*Escola Secundária da Vila Nova*' and 1 from '*Escola Missionária American Board*') answered the question positively.

4.3. Interviews

In relation to the first question, both interviewees reported allowing their teachers deal with crosscutting issues/ topics in classes, especially, for being part of teaching programs. When asked if there were specific programs in their schools to deal with such topics, no specific programs were reported to exist at '*Escola Missionária American Board*'. However, the interviewee reported encouraging teachers to spread messages on the major problems or issues affecting people in general such as HIV/ AIDS, drugs, among other problems.

On the other hand, at '*Escola Secundária Vila Nova*', a number of programs were said to be running in the school. According the interviewee, apart from '*Geração BIZ*', represented in the school, there is also a program run by the Catholic University of Mozambique ('*Universidade Católica de Moçambique*', abbreviated '*UCM*'), called '*Cantinho Americano*', that among other things, it is devoted to raising awareness on issues such as HIV contamination, drugs, among other problems youth normally face. Apart from the aforementioned, in the school in case, female teachers usually sensitise girls on good sexual and reproductive health practices, the importance of delaying marriage, just to mention an example.

The final question was meant to find out from the school leaderships whether they would allow teachers use proscribed or inappropriate language during classes. To the deputy director of "", teachers can mention them as long as they are part of the lesson. To the interviewee, this should not be done in the sense of offending the students. Besides, the use of inappropriate language should not be meant to cause disruption in the classroom. According to the Deputy Director, mentioning some parts of the body may be a source of disruption despite the fact that students often reveal a lot of interest when such aspects are mentioned.

4.4. Teaching Materials

'11: Inglês 11ª Classe'

In general, issues that normally constitute taboos are rather cautiously dealt with throughout the whole course book. The material makes superficial reference to HIV/ AIDS (a sex-related taboo) at least some four times (Pp. 55, 125, 127 and 128). Another instance of the use of this taboo issue or topic can be found on page 125, where the use of condom is vividly advocated (through utterances such as 'Whenever you have sexual contact, you should use condom').

It should be highlighted that even though the use of condoms during sexual intercourse, especially in occasional relationships, has been openly advocated, not only by local health authorities but also by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) working on prevention and combat against HIV/ AIDS, it constitutes a strong religious taboo.

In a nutshell, the course book in case is mainly characterised for avoiding, at its utmost parameter, issues that may clearly generate frictions among its potential users. All terms and/ or language capable of raising conflicting views were kept to a minimum. The language used throughout the whole material was cautiously selected to minimise all sources of contradicting views among students.

'Learning English – 12: Student's Book'

Basing on of the same framework of content analysis, used for the previous course book, it was noticed that, quite differently from the results above, 'Learning English – 12 Student's Book' reflects relatively more instances of reference to proscribed topics and/ or language. 'Learning English – 12: Student's Book' includes taboo issues under Health: Common Illnesses (Pp. 91 - 104), Drugs (Unit 11, Pp. 145 – 156) as well as Religions and Beliefs (Unit 12, Pp. 157 – 168).

In Unit 7 (Health), under Common Illnesses (Pp. 97 – 104), the course book openly refers to terms or expressions such as unsafe sex, sexual fluids (sperm and vaginal fluids), that are considered (strong) taboos, as they are normally avoided, at least in formal environments, in public or among people from different age groups. In the same unit, the course book brings a rather controversial claim: 'Polygamy is not a problem if practised in a safe manner – a polygamous person can still be faithful to his wives and vice-versa (p. 101).'

It is obvious that polygamy is not taken as a taboo everywhere. Among, Muslims, just to state an example, a man can take several women as wives. However, among most Christians, polygamy is a vehemently forbidden practice. More to the points above, in Unit 11 that deals with Drugs (under 'N' for Narcotics, under the above-mentioned framework of analysis) also entails a number of terms that are often avoided in many course books. The material refers to '*cannabis sativa*' (including some of its popular names in many countries such as '*marijuana*' and '*ganja*', cocaine as well as heroin. Still under drugs, the course book refers, though only once, to alcoholism that constitutes the second letter of the acronym PARSNIPs.

Though in many parts of the world, the consumption of alcohol is not taken as a big problem, it constitutes a very strong taboo to some religious organisations. Among Christians and Muslims, just to state some examples, the consumption of alcohol is forbidden.

A further topic that figures in the course book in reference is found under Unit 12 (Religions and Beliefs) and in relation to this aspect; the course book refers to '-isms' such as 'Hinduism' and 'Islamism' among others, issues that are to be avoided for being inappropriate in many cultures (Melliti, 2015).

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the light of the above, there has been a noteworthy tendency for the inclusion of crosscutting topics in teaching programs and because of that teachers are compelled to deal with them in language. In order to understand how teachers and students as well as school leaders react in relation to the treatment of crosscutting issues in language classes, this study was undertaken.

Among the major findings, it was noticed that very little seems to be explored in relation to the benefits of discussing topics normally taken as taboos. Teachers revealed tendency to avoid most topics though they are found in educational programs and as such they should deal with them. Students clearly revealed little enthusiasm in dealing with a number of topics such as 'menstruation', 'pregnancy' as well as 'abortion'. In addition, some resistance in openly using some proscribed words such as four-letter words could be also felt, though students reported using them.

From the interviews, it could be noticed that, though schools involved approach crosscutting issues differently, the school management tended to disclose relative openness in the treatment of issues of taboo nature. An aspect worth mentioning at this stage is that while at "", there are various programs that were created in order to facilitate the dissemination of youth-related topics (issues), at *'Escola Missionária American Board'*, there are no specific programs to deal with crosscutting issues. In addition, because of the religious principles that guide such school, the treatment of crosscutting issues is normally kept to a minimum as anything that goes against the principles of the church is completely forbidden.

A further aspect found was that, from the analysis made on the two course books in use in the intermediate level, while the grade 12 coursebook, in spite of

being still insufficient, brings relatively more instances on the treatment of taboo issues, the grade 11 one is almost devoid of such issues. Such teaching and learning materials are almost devoid of taboo language, taken as one of the tools learners need to know, as they normally encounter on a regular basis.

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Nota do editor:

Artigo submetido para avaliação em: 15 de novembro de 2023.

Aprovado em sistema duplo cego em: 11 de janeiro de 2026.